

Washington, D.C. – The House of Representatives today overwhelmingly approved (357-65) legislation including more than \$100 million for transportation projects in the greater Portland metropolitan area. Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.), a senior member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, secured the funding as part of the \$275 billion package funding the nation's highway and transit projects for the next six years. The bill also includes needed authorization to expand the Portland streetcar system and for continued work on Portland's light rail system, to complete financing for the MAX line and for a new line along I-205.

"These important Oregon projects will create jobs, ease congestion and improve the livability of our communities," Blumenauer said. "The bill passed by the House today provides critical funding that will preserve a balanced national transportation system."

The House reauthorization bill includes several provisions championed by Blumenauer, including: a new Safe Routes to School program to encourage communities to adopt strategies and fund projects designed to allow children to walk and bike to school safely; a new "Small Starts" transit program that would create a \$1 billion discretionary fund for streetcar, commuter rail and bus rapid transit projects to receive federal capital funding; and a new pilot program to finance innovative planning and public involvement projects around the country.

"As Congressional Co-Chair of the House Bike Caucus, I am proud to say that this is the best bike bill Congress has ever passed," said Blumenauer. "It provides over \$1 billion in new funds to help our children walk and bike to school safely, and funds thousands of trails around the country."

Even as he praised the funding of the individual projects for Oregon, Blumenauer vowed to push for an increase in funding for the overall bill, arguing that a boost in transportation funding will help the economy and create jobs for the thousands of Oregonians still looking for work.

"Today's veto-proof vote is a strong repudiation of President Bush's continued insistence to underfund infrastructure investment," said Blumenauer. "Democratic and Republican House Leadership were united in seeking greater transportation funding and keeping faith with the broadest coalition of groups in recent history. If Congress will just listen to the public we can meet these needs."

"The transportation need currently facing Oregon is tremendous. All of the state's

metropolitan areas are working to expand their transit systems and reduce road congestion. Additionally, the state is facing \$4.7 billion in bridge repair needs. A \$375 billion bill would provide the funds necessary to realize these multi-modal needs. The fact that the administration refused to support a bi-partisan bill that will invest in our communities and create jobs is a missed opportunity and another example of its misplaced budget priorities.”

Congressman Blumenauer helped lead the fight for increasing the bill to \$318 billion, the level approved earlier by the U.S Senate. The higher funding level would have created 1.8 million more jobs than the \$275 billion bill without adding to the deficit or raising taxes. Efforts to increase the size of the bill were ultimately not successful.

“Transportation investments have a huge return beyond simply family-wage jobs,” argued Blumenauer. “Each dollar that is invested back in our communities under this legislation will be spent in rebuilding America's crumbling bridges. It will be revitalizing streets. It will be enhancing the environment. This was the time for the House of Representatives to do its job, resist the President, and fully invest in our future by creating family-wage jobs for the millions of Americans still looking for work.”

The projects in the transportation funding package that Blumenauer secured for the Portland area include:

\$11 million for preliminary engineering for a new Columbia River Crossing for transit, freight and vehicles to ease congestion on Interstate-5.

\$7.8 million for street improvements in the Gateway area, as part of the Gateway Urban Renewal District Development Plan to stimulate economic investment in the area.

\$4.5 million for the first of three phases to Metro's Regional Trails Program for acquisition, preliminary engineering and construction of trails.

\$12 million for the Port of Portland to add rail capacity in the Rivergate Industrial District and provide congestion relief in North Portland.

\$3 million for planning Sunrise Corridor transportation and land use options for the Damascus/Boring area. This area will be a new center for regional employment and housing.

\$3 million for safety improvements to Lake Road, a major school route for local school children, between Clackamas Town Center and Milwaukie.

\$2 million for Stark Street improvements in Rockwood Town Center. This area is dangerous for pedestrians and auto traffic. Gresham officials believe this transportation solution will result in attracting private investment to this economically depressed commercial area.

\$1.5 million for construction of a light rail station, bus, bicycle and parking facilities and in support of transit oriented development for Gresham's Civic Neighborhood.

\$200,000 for improvements to address congestion at the BNSF Intermodal Hub on NW Yeon Ave (US 30).

The "Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users" (TEA LU) is the much-awaited House version of legislation to reauthorize federal funding for bikes, transit, pedestrian, bridge and highway projects across the country. The Senate approved a similar version earlier this year at a higher funding level of \$318 billion. The bill must now be considered by a joint House-Senate "conference committee" charged with reconciling the differences between the two versions of the legislation.